

REMARKS

The Office Action of March 19, 2004 has been received and its contents carefully noted.

The present Amendment revises independent claims 1 and 9 to recite that the compressor fingers are elongated, and that their width is substantially smaller than their length. This is supported (for example) by the depiction of compressor fingers 42 in Figure 4 of the present application's drawings. The present Amendment also corrects the dependency of claims 10-18, so the objection in section 1 of the Office Action should be withdrawn. Finally, the present Amendment adds a new dependent claim 19.

The present application addresses a problem that arises in connectors of the type that use a compression mat having elongated compressor fingers that press contact members on a flat cable against connector pads on a printed circuit board. The compressor mat and its fingers are made of elastomeric material, and act as springs. However, the elastomeric material has a tendency to relax after it has been placed in a state of compression, as explained in the paragraph at the middle of page 2 of the present application. This is undesirable, of course, since it may loosen the connections.

The present application teaches that this tendency of the compressor fingers to relax can be reduced by bracing them with a restrainer member having holes through which the compressor fingers extend.

The Office Action rejects the claims for either anticipation or obviousness on the basis of U.S. patent 4,911,644 to Bond et al (hereafter simply "Bond"). For the reasons discussed below, however, it is respectfully submitted that the invention now defined by the claims is patentable over this reference.

Figure 1 of the Bond reference shows a bracket member 25 that exerts force against a pressure member 10, which is disposed above a pressure pad 12 having openings 18. The backing member 25 has a latching arrangement that includes an operating arm 31 and a claw portion 30. More details of Bond's arrangement are shown in Figure 2 of the reference. In particular, Bond's pressure member has projections 43 that extend through the openings in Bond's pressure pad 12 in order to press against conductors 42 of a tape-like cable 41. Reference number 40 identifies a printed circuit board.

The reference does not appear to mention what Bond's pressure member 10 is made of. However, it advises that Bond's pressure pad 12 is made from an elastomeric material (column 3, lines 19-20). Bond teaches that the purpose of his pressure pad 12 is to produce an upward force that is needed by the latching arrangement (see the passages at column 2, lines 7-14 and column 4, lines 16-21). This purpose is different from the reason why a restrainer member is used in Applicant's connector (to combat stress relaxation of elongated compressor fingers).

Independent claim 1 now recites that the compressor fingers are "elongated," and have "a predetermined length and a width that is substantially smaller than the length." In contrast, Bond's Figure 2 shows that the width of his projections 43 is greater than their length. That is, Bond's arrangement uses stubby projections 43, not elongated ones. Furthermore, there is no reason why an ordinarily skilled person might expect that the force exerted by Bond's projections 43 might fall, after assembly of Bond's connector, due to stress relaxation of the material from which Bond's projections 43 is made (whatever this material may be).

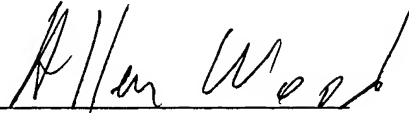
Bond uses his pressure pad 12 to assist in latching his arrangement, and nothing in the reference would have led an ordinarily skilled person to suspect that Bond's pressure pad 12 might be useful for an entirely different purpose in a connector of the type using elongated compressor fingers instead of Bond's stubby projections 43. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the invention now defined by claim 1 is neither anticipated by Bond nor rendered obvious by the reference.

Independent claim 9 has also been amended to recite that the compressor fingers are elongated, and that their width is substantially smaller than their length. Furthermore, step (a) of claim 9 recites that these compressor fingers are braced by a restrainer member, while Bond's pressure pad 12 has a different purpose.

Since the remaining claims depend from the independent claims discussed above and recite additional limitations to further define the invention, they are patentable along with their independent claims and need not be further discussed. It is nevertheless noted that, in section 5, the Office Action relies on an old court decision (before *Graham v. John Deere*) for the proposition that it is within the general skill of a worker in an art to select a new material on the basis of its suitability for its intended use. Regardless of whether this court decision is still viable today in light of the Supreme Court's decision in *Graham v. John Deere*, it should be noted that Bond's intended use for his pressure pad 12 is different from the intended use of the restrainer member employed in the present invention.

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the application is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Allen Wood", written over a horizontal line.

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